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ABSTRACT

Noting that greater family participation in early childhood programs is a widely-held goal, this report addresses the fundamental skills that early childhood teachers and caregivers need to fully involve families in their young children's lives at school and the child care center. The report defines those skills in four areas of a community of learners: communication skills, understanding of cultural diversity, family-based curriculum development, and partnerships in education governance. It also recommends that preservice and inservice programs do more to build all four of those cornerstones in professional development programs. The report begins with a summary of the historic role of parents in early childhood education and the history of public policy concerning parent participation. Much of this discussion is drawn from the literature on family involvement in special education. The report includes a review of family systems theory to reinforce the premise that families exist on a continuum of needs and desires for involvement in early childhood education. It summarizes what practitioners need to know to promote meaningful participation across the continuum, and discusses strategies for including family involvement in preservice and inservice professional development. Contains 71 references. (JPB)

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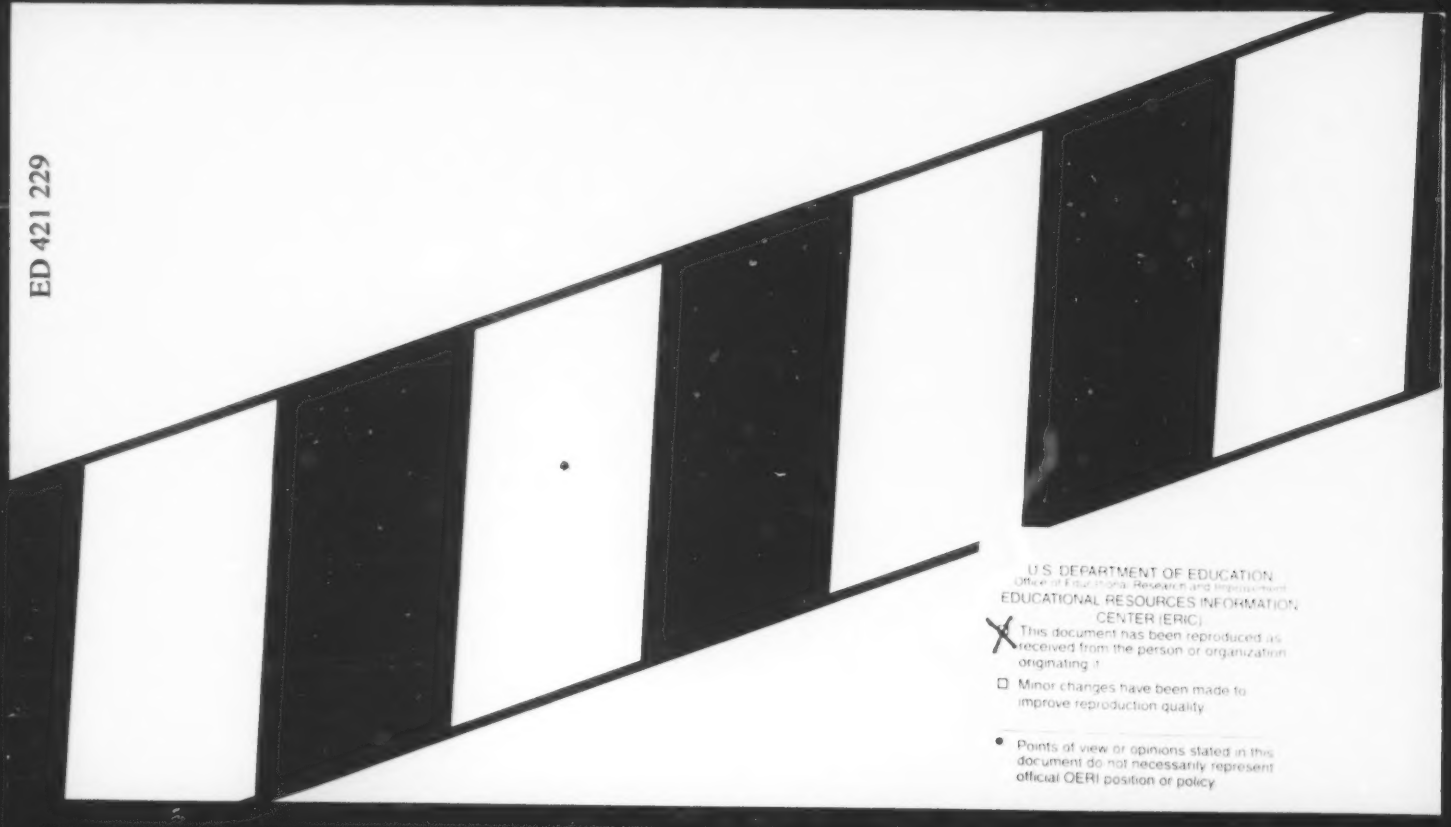

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A Call to Action

Family Involvement as a Critical Component of Teacher Education Programs

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SERVE
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A Call to Action

Family Involvement as a Critical Component of Teacher Education Programs

Written for SERVE
by
Elizabeth F. Shores, M.A.P.H.

1998

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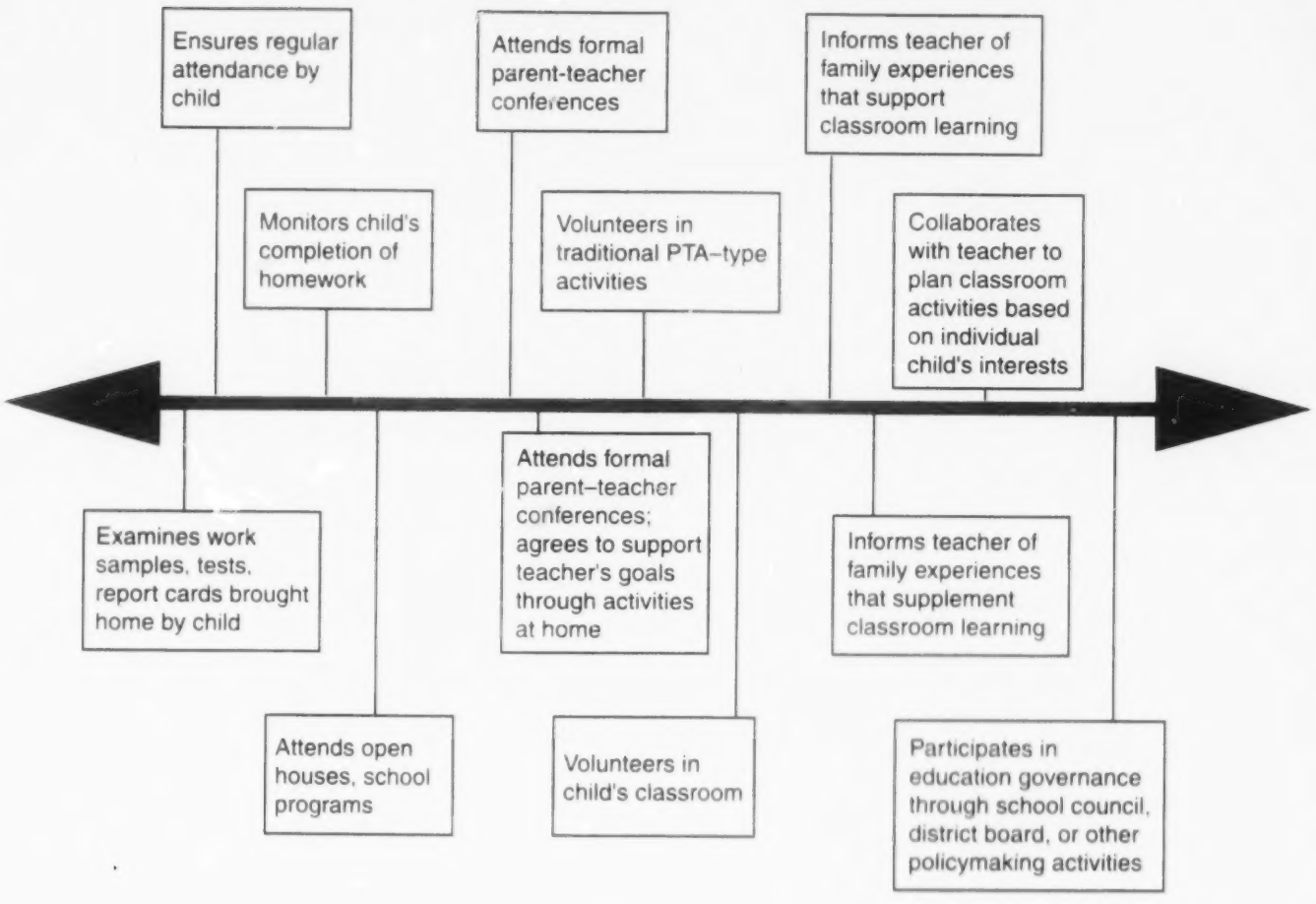
Introduction

Greater family participation in early childhood programs is a widely-held goal. Professionals recognize that young children are inseparably linked to their families, as SERVE's 1996 report, *Families and Schools: An Essential Partnership*, acknowledges. Just as cognitive development is intertwined with physical and social-emotional development, so life at school and at home do not occur in isolation from each other. In fact, home life is a far greater influence on the young child's development, all factors considered, than experiences in the child care center or school. Thus, the parent's involvement in establishing goals for the child's development is critical to success. As Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) note in their classic treatment of family participation, "Both families and professionals have unique contributions to bring to a partnership. Such partnerships can be beneficial not only for the child but for parents and professionals as well" (p. 116). For example, when teachers and caregivers are aware of events in the life of the child's family, they are better able to respond to that child's individual needs (Midkiff & Lawler-Prince, 1992).

However, family participation exists on a continuum. Parents differ in their needs and abilities for participation in their children's early education. Epstein (1992) identifies five categories of family involvement, ranging from basic parenting and support to participating in school governance. Some parents have little time for participating in school activities, while others feel unsure about participating because of unpleasant experiences they had in school when they were children. At the other end of the continuum, many parents want a greater role in their children's days at the center or school. They may feel that professionals discount their ideas. Meanwhile, typical early childhood programs have offered a one-size-fits-all role for parental involvement, emphasizing attendance at formal parent-teacher conferences, cooperation with teacher-directed learning goals, and volunteer tasks. Williams and Chavkin (1985) address this point in a report for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, noting that "traditional activities of audience or school program supporters are at the beginning of the continuum and shared educational decision making is at the other end" (p. 9). In fact, the traditional parent-teacher conference, ensconced in school and center practice by federal mandates, has been the focus of most parent involvement efforts. Enoch (1995), a former school district superintendent in California, argued last year that teachers need more training in "how to get parents to support teachers and how to conduct powerful and meaningful conferences with parents" (p. 24).

However, if the formal parent-teacher conference is seen roughly in the middle of the continuum of family participation (see Figure 1 on page 5) with numerous other opportunities for family participation on either side, then preservice and inservice teacher education can and should do much more to enable teachers and caregivers to involve families at all points on the continuum. Like parents, early childhood teachers and caregivers function on a continuum of awareness and skills in the area of family involvement. Promoting more effective family involvement for all families requires meeting the varied professional development needs of teachers and caregivers. Ideally, parents and teachers alike

Figure 1. Continuum of Family Participation


Ensures regular attendance by child
Attends formal parent-teacher conferences
Informs teacher of family experiences that support classroom learning
Monitors child's completion of homework
Volunteers in traditional PTA–type activities
Collaborates with teacher to plan classroom activities based on individual child's interests
Examines work samples, tests, report cards brought home by child
Attends formal parent–teacher conferences; agrees to support teacher's goals through activities at home
Informs teacher of family experiences that supplement classroom learning
Attends open houses, school programs
Volunteers in child's classroom
Participates in education governance through school council, district board, or other policymaking activities

Note: This diagram indicates family activities that directly relate to the young child's experience at the child care center or school. However, innumerable other home and family experiences, from listening to children's talk to family field trips, support the young child's overall learning.

progress along the continuum to the point where parents no longer merely support teachers' goals for their children but are equal partners in setting those goals. This progression can transform the culture of the learning community from one in which the parents' job is to "know what is expected of them" (Enoch, 1995, p. 26) to one in which every member of the community—child, parent, and teacher—is valued for his or her knowledge, skills, and insights.

Ongoing professional development for early childhood educators, caregivers, and administrators is critical to the full involvement of families in early childhood education and care. Although the importance of family involvement is widely recognized by the field, its implementation in actual practice is weaker. Despite federal mandates for greater family participation in the education and care of young children (particularly children with

special needs), professional development in family involvement has not kept pace with the demand (Winton, 1995).

Kendall (1993) comments that preservice teacher education programs typically provide little preparation for family participation, although early childhood and special education programs typically are better than other preservice programs. "Teacher education cannot continue to operate as usual regarding families and family issues. If we don't change what we do and have education students change what they can do, we will be 'left out of the loop.' It is up to us" (p. 32). Bermudez (1994) calls for preservice and inservice professional development for teachers, including clinical and research-oriented courses, to counter the preconceived notions that teachers tend to have about parents' willingness to participate in their children's education.[1]

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory found a lack of adequate training in general education, reporting in 1984 that teachers were not even prepared to conduct meetings with parents (Williams, Chavkin, & Stallworth, 1984). Brown and Brown (1992) confirmed their finding, reporting that only 64% of teacher education programs addressed parent-teacher relations and that the content and delivery of the training varied significantly. More recently, Young and Hite (1995) surveyed elementary, secondary, and educational administration programs, finding that elementary education programs were more likely to provide some parent involvement training and were more likely to feel that their attention to family involvement was inadequate.[2]

The Harvard Family Research Project surveyed 58 teacher education programs that included family involvement (Shartrand, Kreider, & Erickson-Warfield, 1994), finding that the parent-teacher conference was far and away the most frequently addressed strategy for family involvement. Encouraging parents to teach children at home and recruiting parents as classroom volunteers ranked second and third. "Understanding parent/families" ranked last in the survey of family involvement content.

This report addresses the fundamental skills that early childhood teachers and caregivers need to fully involve families in their young children's lives at school and the child care center, defining those skills in four areas or "cornerstones" of a community of learners. It also recommends that preservice and inservice programs do more to build all four of those cornerstones in professional development programs. The report begins with a summary of the historic role of parents in early childhood education and the history of public policy concerning parent participation. Much of this discussion is drawn from the literature on family involvement in special education, for that specialty was the forerunner for the current emphasis on family involvement in general education. The report includes a review of family systems theory to reinforce the premise that families exist on a continuum of needs and desires for involvement in early childhood education. It next contains a summary of what practitioners need to know to promote meaningful participation across that continuum. The report concludes with strategies for including family involvement in preservice and inservice professional development. From monthly staff meetings to graduate work to leadership in professional associations, there are many strategies for helping early childhood teachers and caregivers learn and teach more about family participation. But more can be done to encourage family participation across the continuum of parent involvement. Most family-involvement training and research have focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the formal parent-teacher conference. The focus here is on better preparing caregivers and teachers to engage family members at other points on the continuum by developing family-centered curricula and by participating as equal partners with parents in education governance.

In a variation on the common terms of "parent education," "parent involvement," and "family involvement," the phrase "family participation" also appears in this report to acknowledge the importance of siblings, grandparents, and other members of the extended family in the young child's life. Furthermore, "to participate" is an active verb, connoting deliberate action on the part of the family, while "to be involved" is passive, connoting compliance with professionals' goals and objectives. In the best possible situations, parents (or guardians) are full partners with teachers or caregivers in caring for and teaching young children.

[1]Educators are not alone in needing to learn more about family involvement. The Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation surveyed training programs in eight related fields, finding that programs in nutrition, psychology, special education, and speech-language pathology all needed additional course content in family involvement (Bailey, Simeonsson, Yoder, & Huntington, 1990). Winton and DiVenere (1995) suggest that most professionals in early intervention have received little training in how to collaborate with families.

[2]The authors wondered if the "counter-intuitive pattern of more offerings equaling less satisfaction" indicated that "less is more" in regard to training for family involvement. A more likely explanation is that elementary teacher educators, being closer to the early childhood field, are more aware of the need for family involvement training than are secondary teacher educators or administrators.

The History of Family Participation in Education and Care

Chapter 1

Society has not always viewed parents as partners in the education of young children. Parents themselves built the foundation for family involvement in education, responding to the historic inadequacy of community-based programs for young children with special needs. Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) identified eight historic roles for parents of children with exceptionalities, from the parent as the cause of the child's deficiency to the parent as political advocate or provider of services.

1960s

Beginning in the 1960s, the federal government gradually required schools to involve parents of children with exceptionalities in forming individual education plans for their children. Turnbull and Winton (1984) trace federal policy in favor of family involvement to the establishment of Head Start in the 1960s (despite ambivalence about parents' participation that was inherent in Head Start's design, which simultaneously assumed that parents needed remediation and that parents needed to be empowered as decision makers concerning their children's education). Federal programs of the 1960s had the philosophy of "helping people to help themselves," which meant "acknowledging the importance of local community and parent participation in community development and educational efforts, and creating legal structures to ensure that participation." The government established many programs requiring parent involvement during this period, including Title I (Chapter I), the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII), Head Start, and migrant and special education programs (Bermudez, 1994, p 11).

1970s

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142), an amendment to the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-750) (EHA), emphasized the assumption that parents deserved to be empowered as decision makers and even assumed that school districts would not meet the needs of children with exceptionalities unless parents had a formal role in helping to develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Under the new law, the parent-teacher conference was a critical procedure for determining the school's services to the child. (Turnbull & Winton, 1984). Thus, federal policy began to focus on the parent's role as a decision maker in the child's education.

1980s

More recent federal legislation emphasized the family's role in supporting the education of very young children with special needs. Under P.L. 99-457, the Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1986, individualized family service plans (IFSPs) are mandatory for infants through two-year-olds with special needs. This provision requires teachers, caregivers, and other professionals to have significant skill in collaborating with families. IFSPs also are influencing intervention plans to focus more on the needs of families and on integration of services to support young children and their families (Silber, 1988; Linder, 1990). This law was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. Revisions in 1991 further expanded the requirements for family involvement in services to infants and toddlers (Winton, 1992).

1990s

Even more recently, the federal government emphasized family involvement for all children. Congress declared in the Improving America's Schools Act of 1993 that "schools and parents must be encouraged to reach out to each other" (Shartrand et al., 1994, p. 6). Including all members of the school community is the first principle of high-quality professional development in a statement of the mission and principles of professional development for educators which the Department adopted in 1995 (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Schools using funds provided under Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act to implement school reform plans must involve parents.

Federal policy has gradually emphasized the parent's role as educational decision maker, particularly for children with special needs, but early childhood caregivers and teachers have not received adequate preparation for encouraging beginning stages of family participation (and much less for meeting parents halfway in equal home-school partnerships). Yet the emphasis on soliciting parents' support of school-initiated goals, particularly through the use of the formal parent-teacher conference, has continued. School principals indicated in a 1980 survey that teachers needed more skills in working with parent volunteers, in conducting parent-teacher conferences, and in consulting with colleagues about working with parents (Chavkin & Williams, 1988). Just last year, the U.S. Department of Education (Riley, 1996) sponsored the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, a coalition of more than 700 family, education, business, religious, and community groups, and Secretary of Education Richard Riley called for family and community members to "step forward and volunteer to work with administrators and teachers to improve learning for our communities' children" (p. 2). Echoing the EHA's emphasis on formal parent-teacher conferences, the Clinton Administration proposed extending the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to allow parents time off from work to attend parent-teacher conferences—not just for parents of children with exceptionalities but for all parents.

So far, federal policy on family involvement in education has had limited effect on state teacher certification requirements. Nardine and Morris (1991) argue that states have made little effort to implement the spirit of federal laws, providing superficial guidance and inadequate financial support for meaningful family involvement. Greenwood and Hickman (1991) have said that state certification examinations have virtually ignored the subject of family involvement. Shartrand et al. (1994) agree, reporting that state teacher certification requirements tend to use vague terms such as "parent involvement," "home-school relations," and "working with parents" without elaboration.

Turnbull and Winton (1984) argue that federal law's emphasis on parents' participation as educational decision makers in planning IEPs for children with exceptionalities has led to a misguided focus on narrow roles for families in school life, sacrificing "a more individual and flexible approach for families" (p. 388). They suggested (Winton & Turnbull, 1981) that parents may prefer informal, casual interactions with teachers and caregivers, for the purpose of exchanging information about their children, to formal parent-teacher conferences or to serving as educational decision makers.

The history of public policy on family participation in early childhood education and care indicates the need for teachers and caregivers to look beyond the formal parent-teacher conference as the primary strategy for involving families in school life. Chapter 2 focuses on the web of relationships within families, establishing the need for providers to open more doors for family involvement in early childhood education and care.

Families in the Life of the Young Child

Chapter 2

Families have a powerful influence over their children's success as learners. In fact, the authors of *Strong Families, Strong Schools* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) report that three factors over which parents have primary control—absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television-watching—accounted for 90 percent of the difference in school performance. There are many overlapping or complementary ideas about the dynamics of family systems (Fewell, 1986; Silber, 1988), but all suggest that early childhood teachers and caregivers cannot effectively meet the needs of young children without recognizing the needs of the children's families. Family systems theory is an important component of professional development for teachers and caregivers.

Interactional Systems

Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) characterize the family as a unit "of many interactions—an interactional system." Each family member's actions can affect all family members, including the children. For this reason, early childhood practitioners must understand the child as a member of the family. According to family systems theory, there are four major subsystems within the nuclear family.

- Marital subsystem—husband-wife interactions
- Parental subsystem—parent-child interactions
- Sibling subsystem—child-child interactions
- Extrafamilial subsystem—whole family or individual member interactions with extended family, friends, neighbors, and professionals (p. 48)

Bermudez (1994) notes that the active involvement of grandparents and other members of the extended family in many young children's daily lives requires teachers and caregivers to rethink the definition of "parent" when planning for family participation.

Family Structure

Family structure is another framework for understanding diversity among families. It is common knowledge that the so-called "nuclear family" with a father who goes to work and a mother who stays at home (and thus has plenty of time to volunteer through the P.T.A., Girl Scouts, and other children's activities) is now a demographic oddity. A family may have a single parent, two parents, or multiple parents. Parents may work or be students or be unemployed. The family may have a middle-class income or depend on public assistance. Race, ethnicity, religious faith, and other factors vary. The internal structure, or roles and responsibilities of each member, also vary. The structure of the family affects how well its members are able to participate in young children's school life (Skrtic, Summers, Brotherson, & Turnbull, 1984).

Family Functions

A third framework for examining families is family functions. Turnbull, Summers, and Brotherson (1984) note seven functions: economic, domestic/health care, recreation, socialization, self-identity, affection, and educational/vocational. Families differ in how many of these functions they perform and in their priorities among the functions. At different times in the life cycle of the family, different members perform different functions. Furthermore, some nuclear families seek help from extended family members, neighbors, and others in performing some functions, thus the importance of the extrafamilial subsystem (Skrtic et al., 1984).

It is important for teachers and caregivers to recognize the multiple functions of family members. Providing snacks or attending a daytime program can seem like a simple expectation to the practitioner, yet be virtually impossible for the parent. Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) note that for parents of young children, child-rearing is a prolonged task with few opportunities to rest. "Early childhood professionals, in their zeal to attain those all-important early developmental gains, should not push parents to the point of burn-out. . .the

family [is] only beginning a lifetime of responsibility. For early childhood programs, an equally important task. . .is to prepare families for the long haul. Families must learn to pace themselves, to relax and take time to meet everyone's needs" (p. 93.)

Family Life Cycle

Finally, the family life cycle is a fourth way of understanding differences among families. Like individuals, families progress through predictable stages. In terms of the relationship to the child, these stages are birth and the preschool years, the school years, adolescence, launching into adulthood, and retirement and old age. (Some theorists identify other stages, such as the stages of parents' acceptance of children's handicaps.) The beginning of each new stage is a stressful time in a family's life. Different families cope with these stresses in different ways. The onset of new stages in the family life cycle affects the family's ability to participate in school life, making the family life cycle an important issue for teachers and caregivers to understand (Skrtic, et al., 1984).

A Multidimensional Framework

Skrtic et al. (1984) synthesize these theories, suggesting that families operate within a multidimensional framework, with interaction of subsystems within the family, various family structures, various family functions, and stages of the family life cycle all affecting an individual family's needs and abilities for participation in school life. Each event in the life of the family prompts the other family members to adapt in various ways; therefore families are continually changing (Massey, 1986).

Readiness for Family Participation

Families' readiness for participation in school or center life depends upon all of these factors. As noted earlier, Bermudez (1994) emphasizes that parent participation exists on a continuum, with limited capacity for involvement at one end and extensive involvement at the other, and that involvement at any stage should be welcomed (Figure 1). Vandegrift and Greene (1992) add that some parents are simply unwilling to be "joiners," so unanimous active participation is an unrealistic goal.

Just as early childhood educators recommend individually appropriate practices for young children, Turnbull and Turnbull suggest an individualized approach for each family. Although the Turnbulls focus on children with exceptionalities, their recommendations are relevant to general education, as well:

> Families have diverse resources arising from different exceptionalities, family sizes and forms, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic status, geographic locations, and individual characteristics such as health, intellectual capacity, and coping styles. The multitude of possible combinations and permutations of all these factors create infinite variations that make each family literally as unique as a snowflake or a fingerprint. . . .Beginning from a base of self-awareness about your own values and backgrounds, it is possible to forge family-school relationships that are truly rewarding for everyone involved (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986, p. 45).

Knowledge of family systems is the foundation for all effective individualization of family participation strategies (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986.). Chapter 3 is a review of how family involvement can occur in actual practice.

The Cornerstones of Family Involvement

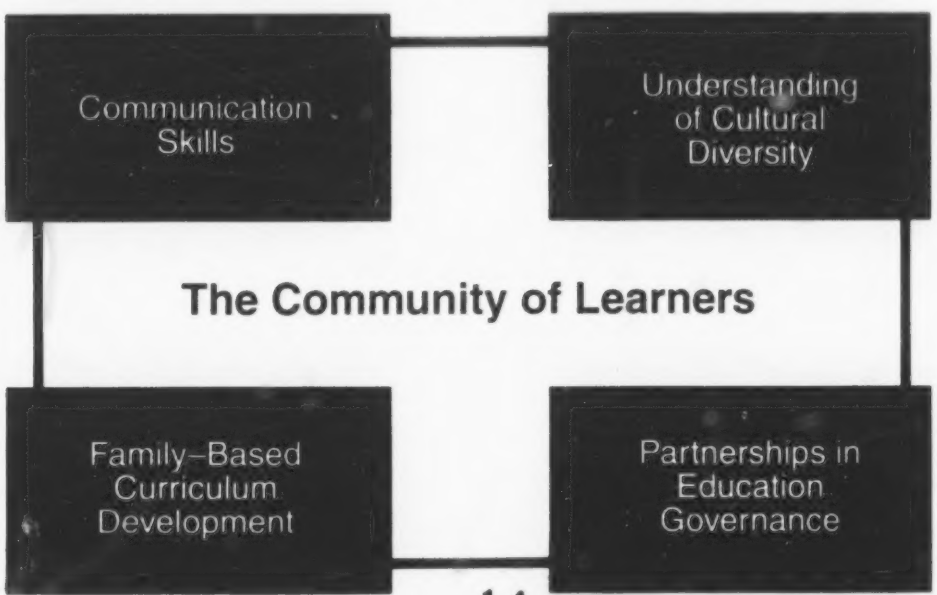
Chapter 3

Preservice and inservice teachers need extensive information and skills in order to achieve meaningful family participation in early childhood programs. Because family involvement exists on a continuum (Figure 1), no single strategy can accomplish full family participation. If we envision the early childhood program with effective family participation as a schoolhouse or child care center built upon the foundation of child development and family systems theory, the major categories of competencies for involving families can be thought of as the cornerstones of the building (see Figure 2). At each corner, one can turn in two directions to involve families. From all four cornerstones, children, professionals, and families face each other, open to new possibilities for learning. The four cornerstones are

- Communication skills
- Understanding of cultural diversity in the local community
- Family-centered curriculum development
- Partnerships in education governance

There is wide agreement that the first two of these cornerstones, communication skills and a genuine understanding of cultural diversity, are essential attributes for teachers and caregivers. These traditional emphases of family involvement receive substantial attention in existing professional development programs, although more can be done (Fero & Bush, 1994). They support current practice's central technique of family involvement, the parent-teacher conference (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Enoch, 1995). By using effective communication skills and understanding the perspectives of diverse families, teachers and caregivers can accomplish more during conferences. As we have seen, however, the parent-teacher conference alone is an insufficient strategy for meaningful family participation because many parents, guardians, and other family members prefer to have less formal opportunities for participation, different kinds of opportunities, or different degrees of responsibility for making important decisions.

Figure 2. The Four Cornerstones of Family Involvement



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Two other strategies can provide significant additional opportunities at other points on the continuum of family participation. These strategies are family-centered curriculum development and teacher-parent partnerships in education governance. Near the beginning of that continuum, curriculum that emerges from, and responds to, the interests and needs of young children and their families can provide powerful ways for family participation even when parents are not prepared to serve as joint decision makers concerning their children's education. At the other end of the continuum, new forms of school or center governance that allow parents significant influence over education policy enable parents to move beyond simply participating in decisions about their own children to become policymakers for entire programs.

Curriculum and education governance have the potential to affect each other in unpredictable ways. Many Americans reflexively support the concept of a national curriculum that emphasizes Western thought and values. On the other hand, progressives and most theorists in early childhood education advocate Dewey's vision of a dynamic curriculum that emerges from the community of learners (Lange, 1993). Although most Americans probably do not fully understand this philosophical debate, curriculum is a profoundly political issue in many communities. Even standard early childhood education practices, such as providing choices, center time, and lessons related to self-esteem, concern parents who are not familiar with child development. Literacy practices such as whole language and thematic units concerning cultural diversity can become incendiary issues in local communities.

For this reason, early childhood teachers and caregivers need to be able to participate in policy discussions and to provide a theoretical, as well as practical, explanation of their practices. Embedding early childhood practices in curricula that relate to the interests of children and families is a developmentally appropriate way to introduce those practices to parents. Opportunities to participate in classroom learning activities, perhaps by sharing stories of their own childhoods, give parents and other family members concrete experiences of the teacher's or caregiver's practices. In this sense, teachers and caregivers can advocate developmentally appropriate practice by engaging families more in the life of their classrooms and centers. However, teachers and caregivers also need to be able to interact professionally with parents who question their practices. They need to be able to discuss the theoretical bases for their practices, and they need to understand the policymaking process in which parents may participate. Nonetheless, typical professional development programs for early childhood teachers and caregivers provide very little information about family-centered curricula as a family involvement strategy or about the practitioner's relationships with parents in education governance. The following sections describe the four cornerstones of family involvement and suggest how these competencies complement each other.

Communication Skills

Communication is widely emphasized in the professional literature as a critical area of competency for family involvement. Winton (1995) identifies effective listening, effective questioning, reflection of feelings, and reflection of content as the essential communication skills. Effective listening skills are especially important when a parent is distressed about his or her child's progress. Moses (1983) points out that parents who are grieving over a child's disability can obstruct effective communication and parent-professional partnerships in many subtle ways, such as not keeping appointments, responding to ideas with "yes, but . . ." or presenting themselves as less capable than they actually are. The effective early childhood teacher listens to discover these thoughts and feelings and responds to them.

However, communication's effectiveness in actual practice has been questioned. Winton (1995) suggests that teachers' and parents' attitudes, perceptions, cultural beliefs, and assumptions can be barriers to communication. A survey found that preservice teachers did not appreciate the interactive nature of genuine communication. Foster and Loven (1992) report that most preservice teachers do not understand that information provided by family members is as valuable as the information that the professional provides to families.

The challenge for teacher educators and administrators is to appropriately convey information about effective communication. Winton (1995) reports that efforts to directly instruct students in communication can actually lead to declines in communication skills and recommends an "interactive, experiential training approach" (p. 215). To integrate verbal and nonverbal communication skills successfully into one's personal style requires systematic practice and use of the skills, according to Turnbull and Turnbull (1986). Teachers and caregivers need practice in several different communication skills, including written communication, public relations, and negotiation.

Written Communication

Writing skills are important for caregivers and teachers in order to promote effective family participation. Federal laws concerning IEPs and IFSPs require written notification of recommendations or decisions concerning children's education as well as written summaries of evaluation results. Less formal "progress letters" and occasional messages are other common types of written communication.

Public Relations

One-on-one communications with parents, in formal conferences and, just as importantly, through informal means, comprise the primary type of communication with families. Public relations is an additional communications technique that can be valuable to the early childhood professional. Providing clear, accurate information about events and practices in the center or classroom to a wider audience boosts the program's visibility in the community. It also gives the early childhood practitioner valuable practice at anticipating and answering questions about the program, so that if particular early childhood practices come into question, the professional is better prepared to advocate for good practice. In this regard, public relations relates to the fourth major emphasis of family participation (partnerships in education governance).

Public relations activities include news releases and advisories, brochures, newsletters, video promotions, media events such as demonstrations and tours, and advertising. Good writing skills and a strong sense of story—what will interest a target audience—are essential for effective public relations. Fortunately, modern technology makes many production skills, such as graphic design, much easier to master than in the past.

Negotiation

Negotiation goes beyond the mere exchange of information. It is an advanced skill that enables the caregiver or teacher to reach a mutual agreement when disagreement occurs. Negotiation is a valuable skill for early childhood practitioners because issues of child-raising, cognitive development, and behavior guidance can be highly emotional for both teachers and parents.

Other Communication Strategies

Bilingualism, home visits, telephone calls, weekend portfolio reviews, and even electronic mail are other one-on-one communication strategies that incorporate verbal and nonverbal communication in different ways. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1996) recommends that early childhood educators develop proficiency in second languages to facilitate communication with families. Incorporating all of these strategies will increase the chance of meeting all families' needs for communication.

Understanding Cultural Diversity in the Community

The importance of cultural diversity in the lives of young children and their families has been widely recognized and even celebrated in the last decade. The popularity of "multicultural" curriculum materials has been one contributing factor; resources about the music, foods, holidays, etc., of different ethnic groups and nationalities fill catalogs of early childhood materials. The work of Louise Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Curriculum Task Force (1989) has been another factor. Derman-Sparks advocates a pro-active curriculum about common forms of bias, designed to prevent development of those biases in young children. Yet typical "multicultural" units may offer few more opportunities for meaningful family participation than units on dinosaurs or space. Anti-bias curriculum activities can have the unfortunate effect of alienating parents and community members by confronting deep-seated cultural beliefs (Derman-Sparks, et al.,1989). Neither strategy necessarily serves the goal of greater family participation in the life of the early childhood program.

Shartrand et al. (1994), in their important study of teacher preparation programs, point to cultural diversity in local communities as a significant potential barrier to effective parent involvement. Parents and practitioners alike can tend to ignore cultural issues that may hamper open communication, perhaps from a belief that acknowledging differences is impolite. At the other extreme, practitioners and parents can exaggerate or misinterpret such differences, with the same result of poor communication. A lack of awareness of cultural diversity in the community can have serious consequences for family participation. Inexperienced teachers may be particularly unable to recognize that family experiences and strengths vary, perhaps thinking that parents do not care about their children. Alberto and Troutman (1990) comment that "this is almost invariably an unjust assumption. Parents may not respond to efforts to communicate with them for any number of reasons, including "a generalized avoidance reaction to schools because of aversive experiences during childhood" (pp. 421-422). Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) comment:

> The problem in any attempt to understand cultural differences is treading a thin line between glossing over differences and promoting stereotypes. . . .It is important to understand the potential for differences in values that may create a very different set of expectations and goals [among parents] from those held by school professionals. It is also important to consider how some cultural lifestyles may serve as strengths in the family's attempt to cope with the implications of an exceptionality (p. 31).

Therefore, to achieve meaningful family participation, it is essential that early childhood teachers and caregivers are knowledgeable about cultural diversity in the communities where they work. When practitioners have a thorough working knowledge of their own communities, they are able to incorporate the life of the community into the classroom or center—and vice versa—in natural ways that open many doors to family participation.

But how are early childhood professionals to develop this deep understanding of diversity in the communities they serve? Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) suggest that understanding begins with self-awareness. Addressing special educators, they note that "your own values and communication styles may not be shared by others, and it is important to realize that 'different' does not necessarily mean 'bad'"(p. 33). Similarly, Foster and Loven (1992) recommend that preservice early childhood teachers "reflect on themselves as people and educators and how their personal views and values will affect their success in working with contemporary families" (p. 18).

The early childhood program at Florida A&M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida, emphasizes self-awareness as the foundation for cultural understanding. Its three-hour undergraduate course, Multicultural Education for Elementary Schools, has the following eight goals to:

1. Correct ethnic and racial myths and stereotypes by providing students with accurate information on the histories, lives, and cultures of ethnic groups
2. Correct the mistaken notion that an ethnic group is synonymous with a minority group
3. Enhance students' self-concepts by developing pride in one's own and others' ethnic and cultural heritages
4. Increase one's sense of cultural identity and ethnic unity
5. Develop skills in introspection and reflective self-analysis
6. Develop skills in clarifying one's own racial and ethnic attitudes and values
7. Develop skills in cross-cultural communication
8. Develop skills in incorporating multicultural content within the total elementary school program (Florida A&M University, undated)

Many other programs in early childhood education have begun to offer similar courses or models. For example, George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, has initiated the Unified Teacher Education Model (UTEM) in early childhood as a pilot program within their Graduate School of Education. Although developed for master's level educators, the program is designed to prepare early care and education professionals to work with culturally, linguistically, and ability-diverse young children and their families in a variety of settings. All coursework is integrated and derived from the conceptual bases of four disciplines: bilingual/ESL education, multicultural education, early childhood education, and early childhood special education.

Interdisciplinary work, incorporating fields such as sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, and the liberal arts can complement such coursework to provide preservice teachers with a rich understanding of cultural diversity on a broad scale. But the challenge to understand cultural diversity in the particular community served by the early childhood program remains. How can the caregiver or teacher develop knowledge and understanding about the ethnic groups, customs, and values of particular local communities? Most importantly, how can he or she use this knowledge to strengthen family participation? One possible answer is the same for both questions: family-centered curriculum development.

Family-Centered Curriculum Development

Family-centered curriculum development is the third cornerstone of meaningful family participation. Early childhood practitioners can find a rich source of information and ideas in the families they serve. At the same time, turning to families for new knowledge about the community involves them in the life of the early childhood program as never before (Swap, 1993). Derman-Sparks et al. (1989) identify involving parents in curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation as one of the major tenets of family involvement. As an example, the Edcouch-Elsa and La Villa Independent School Districts in rural southern Texas plan a multi-year project to involve families in

researching local history and incorporating their findings into the districts' curricula (Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District, 1996).

By turning to families for support in learning about the local community, teachers and caregivers can, in effect, implement a continual professional development program on cultural diversity for themselves while drawing parents and other family members fully into the community of learners. Lessons learned through family participation may also be deeper and richer than lessons packaged in textbooks or kits. To imagine how family-centered curriculum development can promote understanding of cultural diversity and meaningful family participation, consider this hypothetical example:

> Kate, a young girl who has no arms, enrolls in the preschool. Her teacher invites Kate to demonstrate to the other children how she handles everyday tasks such as putting on her shoes. The children (and the teacher) are impressed but still curious about how the girl manages. The teacher asks the parents for ideas about how to learn more. Kate's dad volunteers to visit the classroom with a video of Kate swimming. Kate proudly narrates as the class watches in amazement.

This learning experience could be much more powerful than a teacher-planned, week-long unit about physical disabilities and the harm that results from prejudice against persons with disabilities. Consider another example:

> Several third-graders in Mrs. Bryant's class mention seeing television reports of the arrests of Hispanic factory workers in the community. They saw scenes of the workers being handcuffed and forced into vans. Some children wonder what the workers did wrong, while others repeat their parents' explanation that the workers were "illegal." Martin says that his uncle is a priest who knows many local Spanish-speaking people. Mrs. Bryant contacts the child's uncle and arranges for him to visit the classroom with a Mexican factory worker. Martin introduces his uncle, who translates as the man tells the children how he came to the U.S. to find work and shows the class pictures of his children.

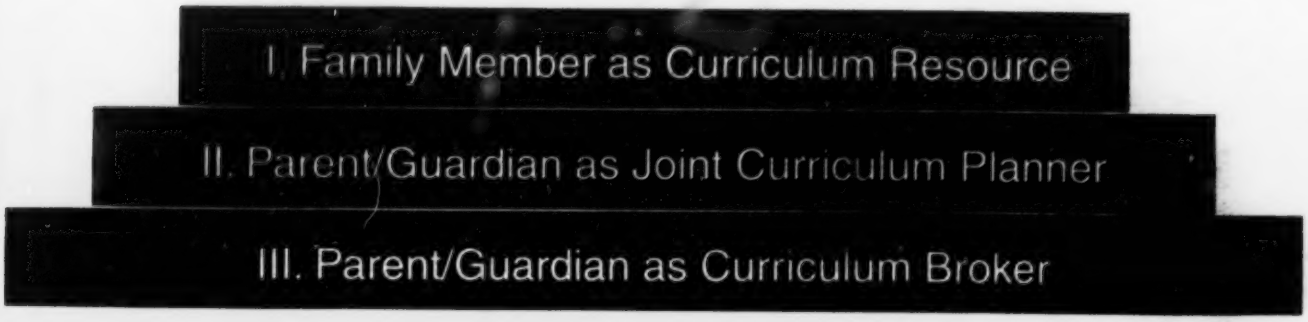
In this example, current events are the springboard for classroom learning. Contacts made through a pupil's family lead to a unique opportunity for the children to meet and interview a member of a cultural minority. In a third hypothetical scenario, a teacher's keen sense for learning opportunities creates a win-win situation for the entire learning community:

> While observing five-year-olds playing "house" at the dramatic play center, Miss Temika hears Angela announce that her grandmother has come to live with her family because "she is too poor." On subsequent days, Miss Temika hears Angela provide more news of the changes, both good and bad, in her household. One problem is the space that the grandmother's quilting frame occupies in the family living room. When the grandmother brings Angela to school one morning, Miss Temika invites her to visit one day and demonstrate quilting in the classroom. Soon the grandmother is storing her quilting frame in the classroom, bringing Angela to school each morning, and quilting for an hour or so before returning home. Her quilt inspires an extended quilt project in the kindergarten.

These examples indicate the potential for family-based curriculum development to substantially enhance traditional family involvement strategies. Cliatt and Shaw (1992) note that early childhood teachers limit themselves when they rely only on their own devices for curriculum planning. McGilp (1994) defines a community school in part as one in which families participate in curriculum development. Moreover, genuine changes in governance, whereby parents have real influence in education policymaking, the fourth major category of family involvement competencies, can only occur in such "community schools," according to McGilp. "It is only when the home and school can emphasize common values that substantiation of school philosophy statements, charters, and mission statements accrue meaning. It is when students, teachers, and parents actively share and practice the ideals and beliefs of the school that students might be convinced of the strength of the home-school connection" (pp. 11-12).

Family-centered curricula emerges from the needs and interests of individual children and their families. In this way, new learning is sure to relate to young learners' firsthand experiences. It is likely to illuminate cultural diversity in the early childhood program and in the community. Family-centered curricula also offer families many different opportunities to participate in their young children's growth and development. Familiar, local topics provide a myriad of opportunities for family involvement across the curriculum, making them developmentally appropriate for young children and their families. When children's inquiries spur extended

Figure 3. Stages of Family-Centered Curriculum Development


I. Family Member as Curriculum Resource
II. Parent/Guardian as Joint Curriculum Planner
III. Parent/Guardian as Curriculum Broker

curriculum projects (Katz & Chard, 1989), opportunities for meaningful family participation abound. A community of learners flourishes when curriculum springs from children's and families' interests.

As a strategy for greater family participation, family-centered curriculum development can occur in three stages (see Figure 3). In the first stage, family members function as resources to the center or classroom, providing materials, information, and volunteer support for investigations of topics selected by the teacher. The teacher has the greatest responsibility to recruit family members for this kind of participation. Angela's grandmother, who visits the classroom to demonstrate quilting, is an example of this stage.

In the second stage, family members participate in planning units on local history, local ecology, local artists, local government, or other topics. (Of course, family members must have first-hand knowledge of the topics in order to participate.) For example, Angela's teacher might ask the girl's grandmother to recommend simple quilt patterns for the kindergartners to try themselves. Teachers still bear the greater responsibility for recruiting family members to participate. The first and second stages of family-centered curriculum development primarily involve whole-group learning goals, although children may have significant choice among specific learning activities.

In the third stage, parents become, in Gardner's (1991) term, "student-curriculum brokers" (p. 246), actually identifying the topic and resources that best fit their children's learning needs at particular times. For example, Janelle's mother might send a note to Janelle's preschool teacher on the day that the child brings the toy for show-and-tell, explaining that her daughter has become very interested in her grandmother's old toys. The parent might suggest to the teacher that Janelle be provided opportunities to tell the other children about the toys, to retell a story her grandmother told, and to compare her grandmother's toy to toys in the classroom. At this stage in the development of family-centered curriculum, the teacher is highly responsive to the parent's suggestions and provides individualized learning opportunities for Janelle that fit her current interests.

This reciprocal relationship strengthens parents' confidence in the teachers' practices. Alberto and Troutman (1990) note that "including parents in the [curriculum] planning process has many advantages for the teacher. Parents who are familiar with educational goals, teaching procedures, and management techniques are much more likely to be supportive" (pp. 421-422). At the same time, involving families in emergent curriculum informs teachers of teachable moments in individual children's daily lives. It becomes an authentic form of continual professional development for the teacher. Adapting existing curricula to meet individual children's needs fits Sparks' and Loucks-Horsley's (1989) fourth model of staff development: involvement in a development/improvement process. Family-based curriculum development also provides the early childhood practitioner with an authentic, natural form of continuing professional development because it constantly provides new information about the community beyond the center or school. In this way caregivers and teachers can continue to learn more about the diversity of the wider community.

Family-based curriculum development springs from, and depends upon, effective assessment and evaluation. Portfolios can support a fluid, continual exchange between home and school. The movement toward portfolio-based assessment offers teachers and caregivers the means for providing much richer information to parents about their children's progress, but also for learning much more from the parents

about the children's lives outside the school or center. This information can frequently serve as new curriculum leads. For example, after seeing her child's journal entry about an out-of-town trip, a parent may mention that the child took photographs on the trip. The teacher can invite the child to bring the photographs to school and use them as illustrations for a book about her trip.

However, most early childhood teachers and caregivers are, at best, at an early stage of using portfolios (Shores & Grace, 1996). They may be comfortable with collecting work samples and displaying them during conferences, but they may not have progressed to photographing or recording classroom events, conducting one-on-one interviews with children, or other effective portfolio techniques. Where attention has been paid to the use of portfolios in family involvement, the focus has been on exhibiting portfolios as visual aids during formal parent-teacher conferences. Portfolios' potential for supporting family participation across the continuum is actually much greater. Caregivers' notes of children's show-and-tell activities, young writers' entries in learning logs, and family members' responses to children's work samples all are leads for extending the classroom into the home and vice versa. Involving children is another strategy for enhancing the traditional parent-teacher conference. Focusing on portfolios is an excellent strategy for involving children in conferences because their own work samples are familiar subjects for the children. Little and Allen (1989) recommend encouraging students to "lead" conferences, suggesting that parents appreciate this strategy because it gives them another window on their children's school personae and also enhances the children's self-confidence.

Within the bounds of confidentiality (an important consideration in portfolio-based assessment), portfolios also can be a deep well of material for school and center public relations. Work samples and other evidence of children's progress can be highly effective advertisements for early childhood programs. Thus, preservice and inservice professional development should address the greater power of portfolios to involve parents and other family members in the full life of the learning community. Tiedt (1993) recommends using portfolio-based assessment in teacher education programs in order to prepare inservice teachers for using portfolios in centers and schools.

Partnerships in Education Governance

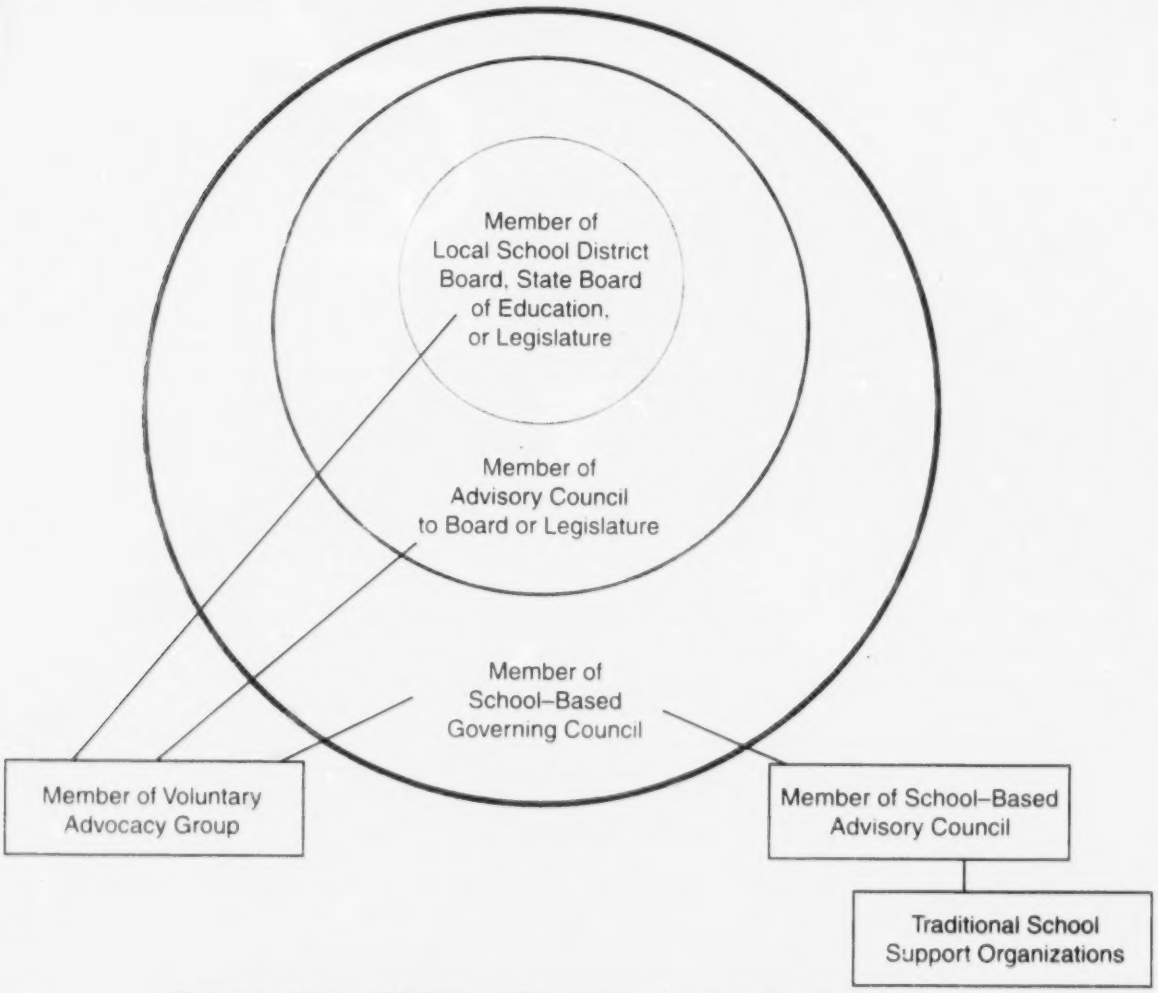
Many experiments in changing the design and governance of schools are underway in American communities, including charter schools and privately-operated public schools. School reform also encompasses curriculum, instruction, and assessment; equity and diversity; and teacher preparation (Little, 1993). Some communities and states are involving parents in decision making for entire schools or school systems, extending the traditional avenues of P.T.A. membership and election to the school district board by creating school councils and other new forms of governance (Guy, 1993; Shartrand et al., 1994; Carey et al., 1996; Rips, 1996; Bradley, 1996).

At the same time, greater public scrutiny of education policy has raised new questions about traditional early childhood practices. From whole language versus phonics to critical thinking versus basic skills to center time versus seat work, early childhood teaching strategies have the potential to alarm parents and community leaders who are not familiar with child development. Teachers and caregivers need to be able to explain their practices, and the best way to prepare them for this responsibility is to include them in policymaking. Yet many efforts at systemic reform have not sufficiently involved teachers and caregivers, even though they are ultimately expected to implement and explain the changes (Watson, 1994). This has compounded the traditional isolation of early childhood professionals inside their individual classrooms, rendering them ever less able to participate in site-based management.

Greater public scrutiny of education policy and new forms of education governance mean that schools and teacher preparation programs must fundamentally change in order for meaningful family participation to be possible across the continuum of parent preferences. At the same time, teachers and other early childhood education personnel must be better prepared to participate themselves in governance (see Figure 4). Responding to this situation, Watson (1994) has called for "a new paradigm in professional development." Little (1993) remarks concerning the state of teacher preparation related to systemic reform:

> On the whole. . . states and districts have been relatively slow to reshape professional development in ways that respond to the complexities and ambiguities of reform. Much reform legislation

Figure 4. Early Childhood Professionals' Roles in Education Governance



Circles and lines of influence: The lone teacher or caregiver has little access to the policymaking process—and little opportunity to demonstrate professionalism in a peer relationship with parents and community leaders.

reflects a tension between incentive and control, between provisions that expand teachers' leadership opportunities. . .and provisions that tighten external controls over teaching and teachers. . . .On the whole, incentives are attached to small, voluntary, and peripheral activities, while the controls embrace the entire teacher workforce and shape more central aspects of their work. In this asymmetry between support and control, we may find some evidence of a pervasive skepticism among policymakers about teachers' capacities and motivations and thus a certain reservation about professional development strategies that measurably expand teachers' collective autonomy (p. 35).

The Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation (CIRIPP) (1992) found through surveys of practicing professionals that many believe systemic change is necessary to realize meaningful family involvement. CIRIPP also suggested that teachers not only be able to interact with parents who have become policymakers but that teachers themselves participate in systemic reform. CIRIPP's recommendations are as pertinent to inservice education as they are to preservice education. The Institute has recommended the following policies:

- A mechanism for promoting systemic change

- An active role for practitioners in encouraging change
- Involvement of teams, including administrators, in planning change
- Family involvement in decisions about changing practices

Lange concurs, noting that "this very environment of school change. . .must be woven into teacher development to engender change in the preparation of teachers as well" (Lange, 1993, p. 80). Likewise, Williams and Chavkin (1985) suggest that teachers must become leaders in order to "help develop community support for the schools" (p. 3). Shartrand et al. (1994) encourage state departments of education and teacher education programs to expand their definitions of parent involvement so that "schools and families are equally valued as resources in children's learning" (p. 24).

But what skills and knowledge do preservice and inservice early childhood practitioners need in order to effectively interact with parents and other community members in the arena of education governance? Of course, they need a repertoire of communication and negotiation skills, and they need a thorough working knowledge of the education policy issues that relate to their work. In addition, they need to understand how child development theory guides best practices, how practices are affected by government regulations, and how they can participate in education governance as professionals who understand these matters. Only with good communication skills and a solid background of knowledge can teachers and caregivers function as advocates for good practice or as policymakers themselves.

The next section, Chapter 4, is a review of the range of professional development activities that can support learning about the four cornerstones of family participation.

Chapter 4

Strategies for Teaching Preservice and Inservice Professionals

There is wide agreement that family involvement is an important topic for preservice and inservice professional development. Chavkin and Williams (1988) emphasize that family involvement should extend from preservice to inservice teacher preparation. They recommend that preservice programs include a strong theoretical component concerning the developmental nature of family participation but focus on traditional parent involvement strategies (presumably the formal parent-teacher conference) (Williams and Chavkin, 1985). On the other hand, Guy (1993) suggests that undergraduate education students may not be developmentally ready to assimilate theories and strategies for family involvement but hastens to add that it is never too soon to introduce the importance of family participation. Martin (1992) recommends an "intensive, hands-on course" on family involvement in teacher education programs as well as ongoing inservice for teachers.

The professional development literature generally recommends that training for family participation cannot end with the undergraduate education degree. Tiedt (1993) recommends seminars for beginning teachers that allow them to continue to meet in established groups and discuss their experiences. "Led by an empathetic, informed university professor, these group sessions provide a safe environment for the beginning teacher where problems can be shared and discussed. Many beginners will continue to attend these seminars for two or three years with those who have more experience reaching out to those with less" (p. 55). Similar to Guy's (1993) concern about the developmental nature of theoretical education, Guskey (1986) argues for concrete-before-abstract learning for inservice teachers, suggesting that teachers' actions must change before their beliefs and attitudes can. A developmental perspective on professional development supports both the concept of a continuum of learning for teachers and caregivers and the division of learning experiences into preservice and inservice education.

Preservice Education

The Harvard Family Research Project (Shartrand et al., 1994) recommends the following criteria for preservice teacher education programs:

- A minimum of five required courses that address parent involvement
- Coverage of at least four types of parent involvement
- Experiential learning opportunities
- Integration of parent involvement as a theme across the curriculum

The degree program in early childhood education at Florida A&M University is an example of the first criterion. FAMU requires four courses that substantially address techniques for family participation. FAMU is also addressing the last criterion by embedding information about family involvement in numerous other courses.

The Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation (CIRIPP) (1992) recommends that practitioners who work with infants receive the following:

- Additional training in federal mandates on family involvement
- Exposure to real programs and services to young children and their families
- More instructional and clinical experiences in working with families
- Greater opportunities for interdisciplinary experiences in family involvement

While CIRIPP's recommendations are for practitioners preparing to work with infants and their families, they are relevant for all early childhood preparation programs. Techniques for incorporating the CIRIPP-recommended elements include undergraduate coursework, case studies, field work, interdisciplinary studies, and other techniques.

DYNAMITE IDEA

Florida A&M University Provides Separate Courses And Embeds Content

The undergraduate degree program in early childhood education at Florida A&M University (Tallahassee, Florida) reflects the first two criteria of the Harvard Family Research Project. The program includes the following required courses:

Freshman Communication Skills I (ENC 1101)
Freshman Communication Skills II (ENC 1102)
Family Structures and Practices (EEC 3402)
Teaching Diverse Populations (EDG 2701)
Family & Community Partnerships in Education (EEC 3404)

The program also incorporates information about family participation in the following courses:

- Child Development I (EEC 3701) and Child Development II (EEC 3702) promote "a respect and appreciation for the role of the family, culture, and community in the development of the child."
- Biomedical Issues of Children with Special Needs (EEC 4703) addresses "the characteristics and needs of babies prenatally exposed to drugs, disease, and other risk factors." It also covers "current trends in traditional and nontraditional intervention . . . [and] legal and confidential considerations."
- Early Identification of Children with Special Needs (ELD 4011) includes a "special emphasis on multicultural processes" as well as the "laws, statutes, agencies, facilities, and resources protecting and serving children with special needs."
- Introduction to Education of Exceptional Children (EEX 4010) addresses "changing views and practices in our society . . . in terms of the needs of those individuals, their parents, and their teachers."
- Biological, Psychological, and Sociological Problems of Mentally Retarded Children (EMR 4011) covers the social development of the child with mental retardation.
- Methods of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages emphasizes "bicultural understandings" along with specific methods.
- Multicultural Education for Elementary Schools (EDE 4031) is designed to "prepare teachers to work effectively in elementary schools having culturally diverse populations."
- Diagnosis, Assessment, and Evaluation in Early Childhood Education (EEC 3613) covers family counseling and "multicultural implications, legal considerations, [and] federal/state/local regulations."

Embedding Content in Existing Courses

Embedding new information about family participation in existing courses may be the most practical way for teacher educators to strengthen their programs (Shartrand et al., 1994). For example, Laverne Warner of Sam Houston State University incorporates information and field experiences regarding family participation in two undergraduate early childhood education courses. Information about family-based curricula also can be embedded in existing courses on curriculum and instruction.

In describing embedding information on family involvement in early intervention in speech-language pathology courses, Crais (1991) recommends the following topics:

- Traditional beliefs and practices concerning family involvement and the impact of P.L. 99-457
- Collaboration in intervention planning
- Ways to involve families in assessment
- Ways to judge family-centered services, modify existing services, and share information with supervisors and colleagues

Classrooms as Families

Concerned that teacher education programs did not prepare beginning teachers to work with families, Portland State University designed an inservice course that included an extensive literature review as well as journal-writing, portfolio development, and individual interviews. Teachers also participated in an empirical study of teacher confidence regarding family involvement. Participants subsequently developed a "Classrooms as Families" preservice and inservice teacher education program that was implemented at the university. After completion of the project, some administrators and teacher educators continued to have monthly breakfast meetings to continue their open-ended discussion of teacher education.

Reference: Driscoll, A., & Nagel, N. (1992). University/school district reflection in teacher education: A collaborative inquiry approach (The Portland State University/East Multnomah County Project: "Classrooms as Families" Teacher Education Program). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, Calif., April 20, 1992.

Contact: Amy Driscoll, associate professor, Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751. 503-725-3000 (phone).

After experimenting with several approaches to embedding this material, Crais determined that teaching an entire course from the perspective of family involvement was more effective than adding modules on family involvement to an existing course or inviting a guest lecturer to emphasize family involvement at certain points during the semester. In the preferred approach, "the family-centered content permeated class discussions throughout the semester and helped frame the entire class with a family-centered approach to assessment and intervention. Throughout the course, case studies and discussion points were used to provide the students with examples of how to involve families in each step of the assessment process" (p. 11). CIRIPP (1992) echoes Crais's recommendation for adapting existing preservice courses to have a family involvement perspective on the grounds that few teacher education programs are likely to add entire courses or programs to their offerings.

The Case Study Method

In the case study method, students are presented with realistic cases involving subject matter in which there is no single, obvious solution. Students discuss alternatives and develop a plan. Winton and McWilliam employ this technique in the course "Working with Families in Early Intervention: An Interdisciplinary Preservice Curriculum" (Winton, 1992; McWilliam, 1992).

Field Work

Experiences in child care centers, family child care homes, schools, and other settings provide concrete experiences for preservice teachers. These experi-

DYNAMITE IDEA

Videotaping for Parent Education

Students at Sam Houston State University in Texas plan learning activities to implement at a nearby child care center and assist each other in videotaping the activities. The videotapes are then made available to parents of the children at the center so that parents can learn more about their own children's progress and about the overall program. Meanwhile, preservice teachers practice an effective strategy for school-to-home communication.

Contact: Laverne Warner, Teacher Education Center, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX 77341-2119.

ences can serve as practica for full courses in family involvement or for broader survey courses. However, Crais (1991) warns that field experiences may not reinforce classroom lessons in family involvement if the sites do not actually practice genuine family involvement. She advises course instructors to inform practicum supervisors of the course's family-involvement content. Asking supervisors to evaluate students' mastery of family involvement techniques can provide an experiential lesson in family involvement for the supervisor and also elicit the supervisor's support for the content.

Community Profiles

Wilma R. de Melendez involves her graduate students in developing profiles of particular communities. The students collect demographic information and compile directories of public and nonprofit services to families. The profiles are worth a full one-fourth of the students' grades in the course, "Family and Community Collaboration in Early Childhood Programs."

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DYNAMITE IDEA

Interdisciplinary Study

In recent years, there has been a trend by universities and colleges to combine early childhood education with other early childhood programs (e.g., special education, bilingual/ESL education). Their blended or interdisciplinary programs are designed to address the need to prepare early childhood professionals to work in inclusive settings with all children. For example, Winton developed the original interdisciplinary "Families" course for early interventionists at CIRIPP and reported that the course attracted students from numerous disciplines and was effective in teaching family involvement theory and techniques (Crais, 1991; CIRIPP, 1992). The three-hour course is offered to graduate students and inservice professionals in twelve disciplines. (See the *Resources* section to order the course materials.)

DYNAMITE IDEA

Parenting Class Practica

Undergraduate early childhood education majors at Southwest Missouri State University plan and conduct classes for parents at a campus parent center or at off-campus sites such as centers for Hispanic and Native American families, homeless shelters, family violence shelters, and a residential substance abuse treatment program. The students conduct a minimum of 20 hours of classes. In addition to developing lesson plans, they write reflections on their experiences with the parents.

Contact: Peggy Pearl, Child-Family Development, Southwest Missouri State University, 901 S. National Ave., Springfield, MO 65804-0094.

Mentor Programs

Preservice teachers can communicate with experienced teachers in a variety of ways. Joining an on-line news group for early childhood professionals, such as the ECENET-L discussion list[2] or a real-time discussion group, are methods with the added benefit of providing experience with contemporary educational technology. The following section on inservice education includes additional information about mentor programs.

Involving Families in Professional Development

Winton and DiVenere (1995) argue for going beyond teaching about the value and techniques of family involvement to actually involving families in the professional development of early interventionists. They suggest involving family members in preservice and inservice instruction as panelists during workshops, as participants in education practica, and even as curriculum planners in training projects. Concerning practica, they note that when students meet and observe families in natural settings outside schools, they learn that "services or recommendations that may appear to be critically important from a professional

perspective decrease in importance when viewed within the context of the family's daily routine" (p. 300). Considering that family participation has become a standard for good practice in general early childhood education as well as in early intervention, their ideas have equal merit for the professional development, both preservice and inservice, of early childhood educators.

Inservice Education

The SERVE Teacher Advisory Council (Thomas, 1993) defined effective inservice programs for teachers as ones that are relevant and needs-based, provide release time, and incorporate mentoring and coaching. The effectiveness of inservice professional development programs depends upon their "fit" with caregivers' and teachers' work demands, schedules, and attitudes. As Little (1993) discusses, the motivation to learn and the opportunity to learn must converge in successful inservice professional development. Early childhood service providers in a Louisiana survey indicated that opportunities to observe and then practice specific skills, with follow-up support and supervision, are more influential than passive training experiences (Sexton et al., 1996). Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) identified five models for inservice professional development, four of which involve active learning by the teachers. Each model offers opportunities for incorporating information about family involvement.

1. **Individually-Guided Staff Development.** In this model, teachers read professional journals, discuss ideas and experiences with their colleagues, and experiment with new strategies. Individual teachers design their own professional development experiences, concentrating on their own needs.

2. **Observation and Assessment.** Clinical supervision of the preservice or beginning teacher, peer coaching among inservice teachers, and the traditional teacher evaluation are examples of this model.

3. **Involvement in a Development/Improvement Process.** Teachers participate in center-, school-, or district-wide change processes. School restructuring or systemic reform processes are the most obvious example of this model. For example, a school-wide plan to systematically involve families in curriculum development would necessarily provide new

Students Live in Housing Projects

A southern university arranged for social work and education students to live in housing projects in the communities where they expected to work.

Reference: Bradley, A. (1991). Teacher trainees at black university to move into public-housing project. *Education Week* (March 13, 1991), 10. Cited in Shartrand, A., Kreider, H., & Erickson-Warfield, H. (1994). Preparing teachers to involve parents: A national survey of teacher education programs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

DYNAMITE IDEA

DYNAMITE IDEA

Students Interview Parents

Students at a community college in Seattle, Washington, interview a minimum of five parents about their sources of support. They write summaries of their findings and attempt to infer implications for their own future teaching practice. The interview process is part of an undergraduate course entitled "Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education."

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learning experiences to the practitioners. This model calls upon the teacher's skills as a leader, facilitator, and negotiator.

4. **Training.** This model includes workshops, conference presentations, and graduate work. The strength of this model can be that outcomes are clear and measurable. For example, a workshop might effectively train preschool staff members to prepare newsletters for dissemination to parents.

5. **Inquiry.** Teacher inquiry may be solitary, an outgrowth of peer coaching, or a planned activity by a small discussion group. Like individually-guided staff development, inquiry stems from the individual teacher's interests and needs. For example, a second-grade teacher certified in elementary education, but lacking a formal background in early childhood education, may enroll in a course on early childhood development at a local university. That course could open her eyes to the importance of meaningful family participation.

No single model will meet all of the professional development needs in an early childhood program. In fact, Tiedt (1993) recommends planning for a variety of approaches, such as summer institutes, team teaching at colleges and universities, and reading and writing groups for supporting continual professional development. The following sections describe various strategies for school- and center-based inservice professional development. Most strategies can fit more than one of the five models.

Workshops

Workshops are a common, traditional approach to inservice teacher preparation. As Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) acknowledge, training through workshops and related formats has the advantage of serving clearly-established goals and frequently allowing for precise measurement of results. Winton's (1993) checklist of quality indicators for inservice training focuses on training for early interventionists, but most of the indicators are applicable to general early childhood education and care.

- Is the training coordinated with your state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan?
- Will you ensure that certification or licensure credits are available to all trainees who participate?
- In planning and conducting this training, will you work as part of an interdisciplinary instructor team?
- Will family members of children. . .participate as part of the instructor's team?
- In terms of the target audience, will efforts be made to conduct "team-based" training (including as many of the key professionals who work together on a team as possible)?
- Will family members be involved as participants?
- Will the training be actively endorsed and/or attended by administrators?
- Will experiential activities and modeling/demonstration opportunities be provided as part of the training?
- Will handouts be provided?
- Will training strategies be varied and sequenced in such a way as to meet the needs of different learning styles?
- Will training strategies be used for embedding/applying the training ideas to the workplace?
- Will trainees identify specific ideas/practices that they desire to try in the workplace (an action plan)?
- Will ongoing support, monitoring, or technical assistance be provided to trainees?
- Will the actual impact of training on practices be measured or evaluated?

Reazor (1994) developed an eight-month in-service program for preschool teachers and parents, incorporating workshops, a monthly newsletter, and parent participation in school programs. The instructional goal was to provide information on child development, developmentally appropriate practice, discipline, Montessori philosophy, self-esteem, and stress. By participating in joint learning opportunities, teachers and parents strengthened their relationships. "Workshops answered many questions in an informal setting for both staff and parents as well as increased opportunities for parents and staff to get to know each other" (p. 20). Workshops were in the evenings. "Each of the outcomes [was] met, the success of which is probably not only a result of the workshops but the conversations which were generated with applications to practical experience. In addition, there was evidence of continued and applied interest after the workshops as individuals initiated conversations, book browsing, and supplemental workshop participation" (p. 31).

Distance Education

Workshops or "teleconferences" provided through satellite broadcasts, Internet discussion groups, and correspondence courses enable practitioners to obtain training from distant sources. Warger and Zorfass (1994) have recommended features that ensure interaction among participants in teleconferences,

Interviewing Workshop

Pamela J. Winton of the University of North Carolina developed a training workshop on family-focused interviewing for in-service early interventionists. The eight-hour workshop covers the components of a family-focused interview as well as basic communication skills. Assessment of the participants revealed that they modified their goals for particular children and families after conducting family-focused interviews, indicating that the participants applied the information they obtained in the interviews.

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Year-long Family Partners

Individual medical students and early childhood special education students in Vermont spend time with families in various situations for an entire year. They accompany the families to medical appointments, IFSP conferences, therapy sessions, and other structured activities. They focus on observing the families during the first semester and then spend a minimum of 48 hours with the family during the second semester. The families participate in setting individualized learning goals for the medical students and serve as co-supervisors of the students during the practica. Students attend biweekly seminars for ongoing support and feedback.

Reference: Winton, P.J., & DiVenere, N. (1995). Family-professional partnerships in early intervention personnel preparation: Guidelines and strategies. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 15*, 296-313.

DYNAMITE IDEA

DYNAMITE IDEA

School District Provides Consultant On Hispanic Families

When an influx of Spanish-speaking families dramatically altered the cultural make-up of schools in Roger, Arkansas, district leaders obtained state funding to hire a consultant to assist teachers in understanding the needs of the new families. The district also hired a Spanish-speaking teacher to work as a home visitor to families of preschool children.

Reference: Shores, E.F. (1995). The Arkansas Statewide Systemic Initiative, Sept., 1993, - August, 1995: Many paths to excellence in the landcape of education reform. Little Rock, AR: Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Department of Higher Education.

Contact: Cecilia Franco, HIPPY, Rogers Public Schools, 501-631-3696 (tel.); 501-631-3691 (fax).

making these training events something like call-in talk shows. Most significantly, they emphasize that presenters should focus on facilitating discussion among participants in distant locations. This would enhance distance learning opportunities with some of the features of mentor programs. (Federally-supported Educational Resources Information Centers, located at different universities and providing extensive information in different educational areas, are accessible by mail, telephone, and on-line services. See the *Resources* section for a list of ERICs.)

Mentor Programs

Many teachers consider advice and assistance from more-skilled colleagues to be a valuable source of professional development (Thomas, 1993). Positive relationships among staff members are particularly important when teachers or caregivers are engaged in difficult changes (Maeroff, 1988), such as incorporating learning centers, implementing portfolios, or serving on school district committees. There are various models for devoting entire schools to continual professional development, including the Holmes Group's concept of the professional development school, the American Federation of Teachers' professional practice school, and the Carnegie Forum's proposal for teaching residencies in schools (Lange, 1993). The U.S. Department of Education (1997) recommends mentors for beginning teachers. Many states are experimenting with incorporating mentorships into teacher certification. Kentucky has a formal program in which three professionals serve as mentors for each beginning teacher. The mentor teams include a teacher from the same school, an administrator, and a university professor (Tiedt, 1993).

Tiedt (1993) devised the Community of Learners Model in which all teachers work on a continuum of experience and leadership, with more-experienced practitioners providing advice and guidance to less-experienced colleagues and students. "The purpose of this community is to promote learning and to integrate planning. A given community may choose to develop a common theme, for example, patterns, family life, or ways of knowing. Thus, they can share ideas and resources and plan activities . . . ." (p. 47). Robbins (1991) advocates peer coaching as a means of overcoming the conventional isolation in which many teachers and caregivers work. She defines this as "a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas and teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace" (p. 1).

Family-Friendly Teacher Talk

"Family-Friendly Teacher Talk" is an Internet site for teachers to share "family-friendly language concerning best practices in early childhood education." Anyone can join the forum and contribute ideas.

Contact: <http://www.nauticom.net/www/cokids/index.html> under "What's New."

Action Research

Providing opportunities for inservice teachers to participate in action research projects is another strategy for experiential learning. Although classroom-based research has not been fully realized in teacher education to date (Lange, 1993), it remains a rich prospect for linking preservice and inservice education. Involving practitioners in action research significantly extends the "interactive dialogue" between teacher education programs and providers that Tiedt (1993) recommends. She suggests that universities

DYNAMITE IDEA

Recording Communication Practice

To practice verbal communication, Turnbull and Turnbull suggest that colleagues discuss an issue or problem for 10-to-20 minutes, taping the conversation. While talking, the practitioners should practice one or two specific communication skills. Afterwards, they can review the tape critically and take note of the positive contributions and those that seem less positive. With time, the colleagues can try adding more skills.

Reference: Turnbull, A. P. & Turnbull, III, H. R. (1986). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: A special partnership*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

facilitate action research groups that meet regularly to discuss individual research projects and also publish their findings. Robbins (1991) notes that action research is a natural framework for peer coaching relationships in which one teacher can formulate a hypothesis and invite a colleague to help him test it.

The specific topics for action research on families are almost unlimited. For example, Flynt, Wood, and Scott (1992) suggest further research on the stress experienced by parents of preschool children with special needs; an action research project might compare different techniques whereby caregivers respond to parental stress.

Journaling

Graves (1993) encourages early childhood teachers to keep reflective journals, writing for a minimum of ten minutes a day about personal experiences. He promotes journaling for teachers as a strategy for improving writing skills and as a way to reflect upon experience. Keeping a reflective journal can support the integration of the four major family participation strategies discussed in this essay. Journaling can help caregivers and teachers improve their written communication skills. It can help them reflect upon their own cultural perspectives and their experiences in the community of learners, deepening their understanding of cultural diversity. The reflective journal can be one repository for teachers' and caregivers' observations of individual children; in turn, those anecdotal records can stimulate new topics and learning experiences in the family-centered curriculum. Finally, keeping a journal is an intellectual exercise that can support the professional's evaluation and analysis of his or her work, preparing him or her to function as a colleague, peer, or advocate in education governance.

DYNAMITE IDEA

Partners for Parent Leadership

Pre-service teachers in Indiana participated in a ten-school action research project that involved parents in designing schoolwide learning projects. The research project's design enabled the preservice teachers to "view parents as capable partners in the education of their children."

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DYNAMITE IDEA

Parents Collaborate in Family-Centered Inservice Project

Parents joined professionals to collaborate on inservice training activities and materials in the Wisconsin Family-Centered Inservice Project.

Reference: Rosin, P., Whitehead, A., Tuchman, L., Jesien, G., & Begun, A. (1993). *Partnerships in early intervention: A training guide on family-centered care, team building and service coordination*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Waisman Center.

Journals are a common exercise in preservice early childhood education programs, where typically an intern or practicum student keeps a journal and submits it to a field supervisor. Journaling also fits several of the models of inservice professional development described by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989). Keeping a journal also can be an essential strategy for self-evaluation to the inservice teacher engaged in individually-guided staff development. A journal can be a first-stage repository for records of observation and assessment of other children or of colleagues. Professionals participating in a development/improvement process can record their experiences during the process in their journals, creating an invaluable record of the process. Finally, the reflective journal can be a wellspring of ideas, questions, and hypotheses for the professional involved in the inquiry form of professional development.

Leadership in Professional Associations and Education Governance

While it is beyond the scope of this document, leadership is itself a professional development experience that must be acknowledged. Experience in local, state-level, and national professional organizations offers many opportunities for learning more about effective family participation. More to the point, participation in education governance through service on a school council, school district board of education, or other policymaking body can enable a teacher or caregiver to learn a great deal about the needs and concerns of the community, including families (Swick, 1991).

The authors derived the types of parent involvement from a survey of 58 teacher education programs. They include general parent involvement, general family knowledge, home-school communication, parent involvement in learning activities, parents and families supporting schools, schools supporting parents and families, and parents and families as change agents.

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DYNAMITE IDEA

Guidelines for Reflective Journals

It is so hard for me not to judge or be mad at my parent when they don't take care of their child appropriately. Sometimes it is hard to sleep. I need to change my attitude and be more open to them and try to help if I can. I need to realize they have learned the actions from somewhere. They may not know better.

I do not have as much tolerance [as] I had thought. However, I did become more open-minded during the time of my visits. Toward the end I looked at how the parents interacted with the children and treated and provided for the children rather than if they had vacuumed the floor that day.

Peggy Pearl, a professor of early childhood education at Southwest Missouri State University, requires students in the course "Parent Involvement" (CFD 560) to write weekly entries in a journal about their field experiences with various family service providers. Students reflect upon their experiences and how they relate to concepts learned in class. The students also comment upon readings in the course and record the specifics/activities of their field experiences.

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Recommendations

Professional programs in early childhood education can do much more to prepare teachers and caregivers to involve families in school or center life. Families need opportunities along a broad spectrum of participation, from supporting teachers' goals at home to collaborating to create curriculum to joining the leadership of center, school, or even the school system. The traditional parent-teacher conference, long the foundation of family involvement practices, is inadequate to meet the diverse needs of modern families and can even obstruct positive relations with some families. Effective family involvement is better understood as resting on four cornerstones: communication, understanding of diversity, family-based curriculum development, and partnerships in education governance.

Many of the specific competencies which various professional organizations recommend for early childhood practitioners relate to these four cornerstones of family involvement. At least two areas may need more attention, however. First, experiences in involving families in continual, informal assessment and evaluation of their young children would be beneficial to teachers and caregivers. Second, teacher educators also should consider the implications of language diversity for their programs. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has recommended that teachers in multilingual communities develop proficiency in their communities' primary languages. Whether it is reasonable or feasible to incorporate bilingualism into certification requirements is an important, unanswered policy question.

Finally, greater appreciation of the developmental nature of family participation, and of professionals' abilities to collaborate with families, is necessary for effective incorporation of discrete skills and concepts into preservice and inservice professional development. A comprehensive early childhood professional development program should include multiple, varied learning experiences with each of the cornerstones of family involvement.

With early childhood education and care being an emotion-charged field with many cultural undertones, it is more important than ever that early childhood practitioners become effective partners with parents and other members of their learning communities. The field of early childhood education must recognize that parents and community members should and will function all along the continuum of family participation—interacting not just at home, with their individual young children, but with the systems that provide education and care.

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Major Competencies for Supporting Family Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care

Organization	Major Competencies for Supporting Family Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care				
	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
National Association for the Education of Young Children **Reference:** National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1995). Guidelines for preparation of early childhood professionals: Associate, baccalaureate, and advanced levels. Washington, D.C.: Author. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	Associate 1.1. Use knowledge of how children develop and learn to provide opportunities that support the physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive, and aesthetic development of all young children from birth through age eight.	3.1.1. Respect parents' choices and goals for children and communicate effectively with parents about curriculum and children's progress.	1.4. Apply knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity to create environments and experiences that affirm and respect culturally and linguistically diverse children, support home language preservation, promote anti-bias approaches and valuing of diversity. 3.2. Demonstrate sensitivity to differences in family structures and social and cultural backgrounds.	2.1. Plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum and instructional practices based on knowledge of individual children, the community, and curriculum goals and content. 2.1.4. Plan and implement an integrated curriculum that focuses on children's needs and interests and takes into account culturally valued content and children's home experiences. 3.1.1. Respect parents' choices . . . for children and communicate effectively with parents about curriculum and children's progress. 3.1.2. Involve families in planning for individual children . . . 4.1. Use informal assessment strategies to . . . individualize curriculum and teaching practices . . .	3.3. Communicate effectively with other professionals . . . and with agencies in the larger community to support children's development, learning, and well-being. 5.2. Demonstrate an understanding of conditions of children, families, and professionals; current issues and trends; legal issues; and legislation and other public policies affecting children [and] families. 5.3. Demonstrate an understanding of the early childhood profession, its historical, philosophical, and social foundations and how these . . . influence current thought and practice. 5.7. Serve as advocates on behalf of young children and their families . . .

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	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
National Association for the Education of Young Children **Reference:** National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1995). Guidelines for preparation of early childhood professionals: Associate, baccalaureate, and advanced levels. Washington, D.C.: Author. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	Initial Certification 3.3. Apply family systems theory, knowledge of the dynamics, roles, and relationships within families and communities.		1.3. Apply knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the significance of sociocultural and political contexts for development and learning, and recognize that children are best understood in the contexts of family, culture, and society. 1.3.1. Demonstrate understanding of the interrelationships among culture, language, and thought and the function of the home language in the development of young children. 1.3.2. Affirm and respect culturally and linguistically diverse children, support home language preservation, and promote anti-bias approaches through the creation of learning environments and experiences.	3.1.3. Support parents in making decisions related to their child's development and parenting. 4.1.1. Observe, record, and assess young children's development and learning and engage children in self-assessment for the purpose of planning appropriate programs, environments, and interactions, and adapting for individual differences. 4.1.2. Develop and use authentic, performance-based assessments of children's learning to assist in planning and to communicate with children and parents.	2.1.1. Use and explain the rationale for developmentally appropriate methods. . . 3.5. Communicate effectively with other professionals concerned with children and with agencies in the larger community to support children's development, learning, and well-being.

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	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
National Association for the Education of Young Children **Reference:** National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1995). Guidelines for preparation of early childhood professionals: Associate, baccalaureate, and advanced levels. Washington, D.C.: Author. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	Master's, Specialist, and Doctoral Candidates 3. Critically examine alternative perspectives regarding central issues in the field (for example, child development, programs for young children and their families, research priorities, or implications for teacher education and staff development).		5. Develop and evaluate programs for children from a variety of diverse cultural and language backgrounds, as well as children of different age and developmental levels, including children with disabilities, children with developmental delays, children who are at-risk for developmental delays, and children with special abilities.	4. Use and develop a variety of procedures for assessment of child development and learning . . . and early childhood education curricula . . .	7. Engage in reflective inquiry and demonstrate professional self-knowledge, for example by collecting data about one's own practice and articulating a personal code of professional ethics. 10. Understand the sociocultural, historical, and political forces that influence the diverse delivery systems . . . for young children and their families . . . 14. Are reflective professionals capable of taking leadership roles in schools or programs . . . and acting as advocates for children at local, stateational levels. 18. Work effectively in several types of leadership roles [such as] advocacy and public policy activity . . .

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	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
National Council for Accrediation of Teacher Education **Reference:** National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (1995). Standards, procedures, and policies for the accreditation of professional education units. Washington, D.C.: Author. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	I.D.1. Acquire and learn to apply knowledge about . . . theories of human development and learning.	I.D.2. Understand and use: Effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communications for fostering active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interactions in the classroom; Effective interactions with parents for supporting students' learning and well-being.	I.E.2. The learning experiences created by teacher candidates build on students' prior experiences, exceptionalities, and cultural backgrounds based on membership in ethnic, racial, gender, language, socioeconomic, community, and family groups, to help all students achieve high levels of learning. I.G.3. Teaching reflects knowledge about and experiences with cultural diversity and exceptionalities.	I.D.2. Understand and use: Effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communications for fostering active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interactions in the classroom; Collaboration with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community for supporting students' learning and well-being.	I.D.1. Candidates acquire and learn to apply knowledge about . . . school law and educational policy.

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	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
National Staff Development Council and National Association of Elementary School Principals. **Reference:** National Staff Development Council. (1995). Standards for staff development: Elementary school edition. Oxford, OH: Author. (Available for $15.00 from NSDC, P.O. Box 240, Oxford, OH, 45056.) **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	Effective elementary school staff development increases administrators' and teachers' understanding of how to provide school environments and instruction that are responsive to the developmental needs of children in grades pre-kindergarten through six (p. 37). Effective elementary school staff development facilitates staff collaboration with and support of families for improving student performance (p. 48).	Effective elementary school staff development requires staff members to learn and apply collaborative skills to conduct meetings, make shared decisions, solve problems, and work collegially (p. 33).	Effective elementary school staff development addresses diversity by providing awareness and training related to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to ensure that an equitable and quality education is provided to all students (p. 41).	Effective elementary school staff development enables educators to provide challenging, developmentally-appropriate interdisciplinary curricula that engage students in integrative ways of thinking and learning (p. 43). Effective elementary school staff development prepares teachers to use various types of performance assessment in their classrooms (p. 50).	Effective elementary school staff development facilitates the development and implementation of school and classroom-based management which maximize student learning (p. 39).

Organization	Major Competencies for Supporting Family Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care				
	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
Division for Early Childhood (Council for Exceptional Children), National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Association of Teacher Educators **Reference:** Division for Early Childhood. (Undated). Personnel standards for early education and early intervention: Guidelines for licensure in early childhood special education. Washington, D.C.: Author. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	3.1.1. Apply family systems theory and knowledge of the dynamic, roles, an relationships within families and communities.	3.1.4. Respect parents' choices and goals for children and communicate effectively with parents about curriculum and children's progress. 3.2.6. Employ two-way communication skills.	1.4. Apply knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the significance of sociocultural and political contexts for development and learning, and recognize that children are best understood in the contexts of family, culture, and society. 3.1.2. Demonstrate sensitivity to differences in family structures and social and cultural backgrounds. 4.1.10. Implement culturally unbiased assessment instruments and procedures.	2.1.5. Develop and select learning experiences. . . that affirm and respect family, cultural, and societal diversity . . . 2.1.8. Support and facilitate family and child interactions as primary contexts for learning and development. 2.1.10. Develop and implement an integrated curriculum that focuses on children's needs and interests and takes into accounty culturally valued content and children's home experiences. 3.1.4. Respect parents' . . . goals for children and communicate effectively with parents about curriculum . . . 3.1.5. Involve families in assessing and planning for individual children . . . 4.1.4. Involve families as active participants in the assessment process.	5.1. Articulate the historical, philosophical, and legal basis of services for young children . . . 5.2. Identify ethical and policy issues related to educational, social, and medical services for young children and their families. 5.3. Identify current trends and issues in early childhood education, early childhood special education, and special education. 5.4. Identify legislation that affects children, families, and programs for children. 5.6. Serve as advocates on behalf of young children and their families [and] improved quality of programs and services for young children . . .

Organization	Major Competencies for Supporting Family Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care				
	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation **Reference:** Winton, P.J. (1992). *Working with families in early intervention: An interdisciplinary preservice curriculum* (2nd ed.). Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. (Available for $15.00 from Frank Porter Graham CDC, CB #8185, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC, 27599-8185.) **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	I.A.1.a. Demonstrate knowledge of an ecosystemic paradigm as a way of understanding "at risk" children, families and the role of early intervention. I.A.2.a. Espouse the belief that families should be able to participate as equal partners in the planning of goals and services. I.B.2.a. Espouse the attitude or belief that the young child is best understood in the context of the whole family, and that change or intervention directed at one family member affects every other member.	I.C.3 a. Demonstrate the ability to listen to how families define their situation and the events related to their handicapped child. IV.A.3.b. Demonstrate the use of questioning skills in order to collaboratively generate a set of intervention outcomes.	I.B.1.b. Describe one's own cultural values and how these might affect your work with families. I.B.3.b. Demonstrate the ability to adapt intervention practices to fit the cultural context of different families.	I.A.3.a. Demonstrate the ability to individualize working with families, depending upon each family's unique situation.	II.A.3.b. Identify and meet with professionals from all agencies and programs in your local community relevant to early intervention to identify key issues associated with coordinating services and to develop a plan for addressing those issues.

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	Knowledge of Family Systems Theory	**Communication Skills**	**Understanding of Cultural Diversity**	**Family-based Curriculum Development**	**Education Governance**
Association for Childhood Education International **References:** Association for Childhood Education International. (Spring 1997). Preparation of Early Childhood Teachers. *Childhood Education, 73*(3), 164-165. Association for Childhood Education International. (Spring 1997). Preparation of Elementary Teachers. *Childhood Education, 73*(3), 166-167. **Note:** The complete document contains many additional competencies.	[An ability to implement] appropriate roles for teachers, parents and peers in social contexts to encourage responsible social development. [An ability to recognize and respond] to families (traditional and diversified) in school/parent/community relationships that involve them in the educational process.	An ability to articulate one's thoughts orally and in writing. A comprehension of the variety and complexity of communication patterns as expressed by people of differing cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in a global context.	A knowledge and understanding of differences and similarities among societies and cultures, both at home and abroad. An understanding of and appreciation for similarities and differences among societies and cultural groups.		An awareness of the social, historical and political forces affecting children and the implications for education within individual nations and world contexts. [An ability to work] with paraprofessionals and community organizations. [Leadership ability] for appropriate contexts.

About the SERVE Organization

SERVE, the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, is a consortium of educational organizations whose mission is to promote and support the continual improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. Formed by a coalition of business leaders, governors, policymakers, and educators seeking systemic, lasting improvement in education, the organization is governed and guided by a Board of Directors that includes the chief state school officers, governors, and legislative representatives from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Committed to creating a shared vision of the future of education in the Southeast, the consortium impacts educational change by addressing critical educational issues in the region, acting as a catalyst for positive change and serving as a resource to individuals and groups striving for comprehensive school improvement.

SERVE's core component is a regional educational laboratory funded since 1990 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. Building from this core, SERVE has developed a system of programs and initiatives that provides a spectrum of resources, services, and products for responding effectively to national, regional, state, and local needs. SERVE is a dynamic force, transforming national education reform strategies into progressive policies and viable initiatives at all levels. SERVE Laboratory programs and key activities are centered around:

- Applying research and development related to improving teaching, learning, and organizational management
- Serving the educational needs of young children and their families more effectively
- Providing field and information services to promote and assist local implementation of research-based practices and programs
- Offering policy services, information, and assistance to decision makers concerned with developing progressive educational policy
- Connecting educators to a regional computerized communication system, so that they may search for and share information, and network
- Developing and disseminating publications and products designed to give educators practical information and the latest research on common issues and problems

The Eisenhower Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education at SERVE is part of the national infrastructure for the improvement of mathematics and science education sponsored by OERI. The consortium coordinates resources, disseminates exemplary instructional materials, and provides technical assistance for implementing teaching methods and assessment tools.

The SouthEast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR◆TEC) serves 14 states and territories. A seven-member partnership led by SERVE, the consortium offers a variety of services to foster the infusion of technology into K-12 classrooms. The Region IV Comprehensive Assistance Center provides a coordinated, comprehensive approach to technical assistance through its partnership with SERVE.

A set of special purpose institutes completes the system of SERVE resources. These institutes provide education stakeholders extended site-based access to high quality professional development programs, evaluation and assessment services, training and policy development to improve school safety, and subject area or project-specific planning and implementation assistance to support clients' school improvement goals.

Following the distributive approach to responding and providing services to its customers, SERVE has ten offices in the region. The North Carolina office at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is headquarters for the Laboratory's executive services and operations. Policy offices are located in the departments of education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

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Quantity	Description	Item No.	Unit Price	Total

Subtotal	
Non-exempt Florida residents add 7% sales tax:	
S & H*	
Total	

Mail to:
SERVE
Publications Department
345 South Magnolia Drive
Suite D-23
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Please photocopy this form for future orders.

Florida Tax Exemption #: